

THE BEATIFIC VISION

NOS. 61-62

A SERMON
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AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK

“We shall see him as he is.”
1 John 3:2

IT is one of the most natural desires in all the world that when we hear of a great and a good man, we should wish to see his person. When we read the works of any eminent author, we are accustomed to turn to the frontispiece to look for his portrait. When we hear of any wondrous deed of daring, we will crowd our windows to see the warrior ride through the streets. When we know of any man who is holy and who is eminently devoted to his work, we will not mind tarrying anywhere if we may but have a glimpse of him whom God has so highly blessed.

This feeling becomes doubly powerful when we have any connection with the man, when we feel, not only that he is great, but that he is great for us—not simply that he is good, but that he is good to us—not only that he is benevolent, but that he has been a benefactor to us as individuals. Then the wish to see him rises to a craving desire, and the desire is insatiable until it can satisfy itself in seeing that unknown, and hitherto unseen donor, who has done such wondrously good deeds for us.

I am sure, my brethren, you will all confess that this strong desire has arisen in your minds concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. We owe to none so much. We talk of none so much, we hope, and we think of none so much. At any rate, no one so constantly thinks of us. We have I believe, all of us who love His name, a most insatiable wish to behold His person.

The thing for which I would pray above all others, would be forever to behold His face, forever to lay my head upon His breast, forever to know that I am His, forever to dwell with Him. Ay, one short glimpse, one transitory vision of His glory, one brief glance at His marred, but now exalted and beaming countenance, would repay almost a world of trouble.

We have a strong desire to see Him. Nor do I think that that desire is wrong. Moses himself asked that he might see God. Had it been a wrong wish arising out of vain curiosity, it would not have been granted, but God granted Moses his desire. He put him in the cleft of the rock, shaded him with His hands, bade him look at the skirts of His garments, because His face could not be seen.

Yea, more, the earnest desire of the very best of men has been in the same direction. Job said, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and though worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” That was his desire. The holy psalmist said, “I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness.” “I shall behold thy face in righteousness.”

And most saints, on their deathbeds, have expressed their fondest, dearest, and most blessed wish for heaven, in the expression of longing “to be with Christ, which is far better.” And not ill did our sweet singer of Israel put the words together, when he humbly said, and sweetly too—

*“Millions of years my wondering eyes
 Shall o’er Thy beauties rove;
 And endless ages I’ll adore
 The glories of Thy love.”*

We are rejoiced to find such a verse as this, for it tells us that our curiosity shall be satisfied, our desire consummated, our bliss perfected. “WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS.” Heaven shall be ours, and all we ever dreamed of Him shall be more than in our possession.

By the help of God’s mighty Spirit, who alone can put words in our mouths, let us speak first of all concerning *the glorious position*, “AS HE IS.” Secondly, *His personal identity*, “We shall see HIM as *he is*.” Thirdly, *the positive vision*, “We SHALL SEE him as he is.” And fourthly, *the actual persons*, “WE shall see him as he is.”

I. First then, THE GLORIOUS POSITION.

Our minds often revert to Christ as He was, and as such we have desired to see Him. Ah! how often have we wished to see the babe that slept in Bethlehem! How earnestly have we desired to see the man who talked with the woman at the well! How frequently have we wished that we might see the blessed Physician walking amongst the sick and dying, giving life with His touch, and healing with His breath!

How frequently too have our thoughts retired to Gethsemane, and we have wished our eyes were strong enough to pierce through eighteen hundred and fifty years which part us from that wondrous spectacle, that we might see Him as He was! We shall never see Him thus.

Bethlehem’s glories are gone forever. Calvary’s glooms are swept away. Gethsemane’s scene is dissolved. And even Tabor’s splendors are quenched in the past. They are as things that were. Nor shall they ever have a resurrection. The thorny crown, the spear, the sponge, the nails—these are not. The manger and the rocky tomb are gone. The places are there, unsanctified by Christian feet, unblessed, unhallowed by the presence of their Lord. We shall never see Him as He was.

In vain our fancy tries to paint it or our imagination to fashion it. We cannot, must not, see Him as He was, nor do we wish, for we have a larger promise, “We shall see him as he *is*.” Come, just look at that a few moments by way of contrast, and then I am sure you will prefer to see Christ as He *is*, rather than behold Him as He was.

Consider, first of all, that we shall not see Him *abased in His incarnation*, but *exalted in His glory*. We are not to see the infant of a span long. We are not to admire the youthful boy. We are not to address the incipient man. We are not to pity the man wiping the hot sweat from His burning brow. We are not to behold Him shivering in the midnight air. We are not to behold Him subject to pains, and weaknesses, and sorrows, and infirmities like ours.

We are not to see the eye wearied by sleeplessness. We are not to behold hands tired in labor. We are not to behold His feet bleeding with arduous journeys, too long for their strength. We are not to see Him with His soul distressed. We are not to behold Him abased and sorrowful. Oh! the sight is better still. We are to see Him exalted. We shall see the head, but not with its thorny crown.

*“The head that once was crowned with thorns,
Is crown’d with glory now.”*

We shall see the hand and the nail prints too, but not the nail. It has been once drawn out and forever. We shall see His side and its pierced wound too, but the blood shall not issue from it. We shall see Him not with a peasant’s garb around Him, but with the empire of the universe upon His shoulders. We shall see Him, not with a reed in His hand, but grasping a golden scepter.

We shall see Him, not as mocked and spit upon and insulted, not bone of our bone, in all our agonies, afflictions and distresses, but we shall see Him exalted. No longer Christ the man of sorrows, the acquaintance of grief, but Christ the Man-God, radiant with splendor, effulgent with light, clothed with rainbows, girded with clouds, wrapped in lightnings, crowned with stars, the sun beneath His feet.

Oh! glorious vision! How can we guess what *He is*? What words can tell us? or how can we speak thereof? Yet whate’er He is, with all His splendor unveiled, all His glories unclouded, and Himself unclothed—we shall see him as he *is*.

Remember again, we are not to see Christ as He was, the *despised*, the *tempted one*. We shall never see Christ sitting in the wilderness, while the arch-traitor says to Him, “If you are the Son of God command that these stones be made bread.” We shall not see Him standing firmly on the temple’s pinnacle, bidding defiance to the evil one who bids Him cast Himself down from that towering height.

We shall not see Him erect on the mountain of temptation, with the earth offered to Him if He will but crouch at the feet of the demon. Nay, nor shall we see Him mocked by Pharisees, tempted by Sadducees, laughed at by Herodians. We shall not behold Him with the finger of scorn pointed at Him. We shall never see Him called a “drunken man, and a winebibber.”

We shall never see the calumniated, the insulted, the molested, the despised Jesus. He will not be seen as one from whom we shall hide our faces, who “was despised, and we esteemed him not.” Never shall these eyes see those blessed cheeks dripping with spittle, never shall these hands touch that blessed hand of His while stained with infamy. We shall not see Him despised of men and oppressed, but “we shall see him as he is.”

*“No more the bloody spear,
The cross and nails no more;
For hell itself shakes at His name,
And all the heavens adore.”*

No tempting devil near Him, for the dragon is beneath His feet. No insulting men, for lo! the redeemed cast their crowns before His feet. No molesting demons, for angels sound His lofty praise through every golden street. Princes bow before Him, the kings of the isles bring tribute, all nations pay Him homage, while the great God of heaven and earth shining on Him, gives Him mighty honor.

We shall see Him, beloved, not abhorred, not despised and rejected, but worshipped, honored, crowned, exalted, served by flaming spirits, and worshipped by cherubim and seraphim. “We shall see him as he is.”

Mark again. We shall not see the Christ *wrestling with pain*, but Christ *as a conqueror*. We shall never see Him tread the winepress alone, but we shall see Him when we shall cry, “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?”

We shall never see Him as when He stood foot to foot with His enemy, but we shall see Him when His enemy is beneath His feet. We shall never see Him as the bloody sweat streams from His whole body, but we shall see Him as He has put all things under Him, and has conquered hell itself. We shall never see Him as the wrestler, but we shall see Him grasp the prize.

We shall never see Him scaling the rampart, but we shall see Him wave the sword of victory on the top thereof. We shall not see Him fight, but we shall see Him return from the fight victorious and shall cry, “Crown Him! Crown Him! Crowns become the victor’s brow.” “*We shall see him as he is.*”

Yet again. We shall never see our Savior under His Father’s *displeasure*, but we shall see Him *honored by His Father’s smile*. The darkest hour of Christ’s life was when His Father forsook Him—that gloomy hour when His Father’s remorseless hand held the cup to His Son’s own lips, and bitter though it was, said to Him, “Drink My Son—ay, drink.”

And when the quivering Savior, for a moment, having man within Him—strong in its agonies for the moment, said, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” Oh! it was a dark moment when the Father’s ears were deaf to His Son’s petitions, when the Father’s eyes were closed upon His Son’s agonies.

“My Father,” said the Son, “Can You not remove the cup? Is there no way else for Your severe justice? Is there no other medium for man’s salvation?” There is none! Ah! it was a terrible moment when He tasted the wormwood and the gall, and surely darker still was that sad mid-day-midnight, when the sun hid his face in darkness, while Jesus cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Believer, you will never see that sick face. You will never see that wan, wan forehead. You will never see that poor scarred brow. You will never see those tearful eyes. You will never see that pale emaciated body. You will never see that weary, weary heart! You will never see that exceedingly sorrowful spirit, for the Father never turns His face away now.

But what will you see? You will see your Lord lit up with His Father's light as well as with His own. You will see Him caressed by His beloved Parent. You will see Him sitting at His Father's right hand, glorified and exalted forever. "*We shall see him as he is.*"

Perhaps I have not shown clearly enough the difference between the two visions—the sight of what He was and what He is. Allow me then, a moment more and I will try and make it clearer still. When we see Christ as He was, how *astonished* we are! One of the first feelings we should have, if we could have gone to the Mount of Olives and seen our Savior sweating there, would have been astonishment. When we were told that it was the Son of God in agonies, we should have lifted up our hands, and there would have been no speech in us at the thought.

But then, beloved, here is the difference. The believer will be as much astonished when he sees Jesus' glories as He sits on His throne, as he would have been to have seen Him in His earthly sufferings. The one would have been astonishment, and horror would have succeeded it. But when we see Jesus as He is, it will be *astonishment without horror*. We shall not for one moment feel terrified at the sight, but rather—

*“Our joys shall run eternal rounds,
Beyond the limits of the skies.
And earth's remotest bounds.”*

If we could see Jesus as He was, we should see Him with *great awe*. If we had seen Him walking on the water, what awe should we have felt! If we had seen Him raising the dead, we should have thought Him a most majestic Being. So we shall feel awe when we see Christ on His throne. But the first kind of awe is awe compounded with fear, for when they saw Jesus walking on the water they cried out and were afraid. But when we shall see Christ as He is, we shall say,

*“Majestic sweetness sits enthroned
Upon His awful brow.”*

There will be no fear with the awe—but it will be *awe without fear*. We shall not bow before Him with trembling, but it will be with joy. We shall not shake at His presence, but rejoice with joy unspeakable.

Furthermore, if we had seen Christ as He was, we should have had great *love* for Him, but that love would have been compounded with *pity*. We should stand over Him and say,

*“Alas! and did my Savior bleed,
And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?”*

We shall love Him quite as much when we see Him in heaven, and more too, but it will be *love without pity*. We shall not say, “Alas!” but we shall shout—

*“All hail, the power of Jesu's name;
Let angels prostrate fall:
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.”*

Once again. If we had seen Jesus Christ as He was here below, there would have been *joy* to think that He came *to save us*, but we should have had *sorrow* mingled with it to think that we *needed saving*. Our sins would make us grieve that He should die, and “alas!” would burst from us even with a song of joy. But when we see Him, there it will be *joy without sorrow*, sin and sorrow itself will have gone—ours will be a pure, unmingled, unadulterated joy.

Yet more. If we had seen our Savior as He was, it would have been a *triumph* to see how He conquered, but still there would have been *suspense* about it. We should have feared lest He might not overcome. But when we see Him up there it will be *triumph without suspense*. Sheathe the sword, the battle’s won. ’Tis over now. “’Tis finished,” has been said. The grave has been past, the gates have been opened, and now, henceforth, and forever, He sits down at His Father’s right hand, from whence also He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

Here, then, is the difference. “We shall see him as he is.” We shall feel astonishment without horror, awe without fear, love without pity, joy without sorrow, triumph without suspense. That is the glorious position. Poor words, why fail you? Poor lips, why speak you not much better? If you could, you would, for these are glorious things you speak of. “WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS.”

II. Now secondly, we have PERSONAL IDENTITY.

Perhaps while I have been speaking, some have said, “Ah! but I want to see *the* Savior, the Savior of Calvary, the Savior of Judea, the very one that died for me. I do not so much pant to see the glorious Savior you have spoken of. I want to see that very Savior who did the works of love, the suffering Savior, for Him I love.”

Beloved, you shall see Him. It is the same one. There is personal identity. “We shall see him.” “Our eyes shall see him and not another.” “We shall see HIM as he is.” It is a charming thought that we shall see the very, very Christ. And the poet sung well, who said—

*“Oh! how the thought that I shall know
The man who suffered here below,
To manifest His favour,
For me, and those whom most I love,
Or here, or with Himself above,
Does my delighted passion move,
At that sweet word ‘for ever.’
Forever to behold Him shine,
For evermore to call Him mine,
And see Him still before me.
For ever on His face to gaze,
And meet His full assembled rays,
While all the Father He displays,
To all the saints for ever.”*

That is what we want—to see the same Savior. Ay, it will be the same Lord we shall see in heaven. Our eyes shall see *Him* and not another.

We shall be sure it is He, for when we enter heaven we shall know Him by His *manhood and Godhead*. We shall find Him a man, even as much as He was on earth. We shall find Him man and God too, and we shall be quite sure there never was another Man-God, we never read or dreamed of another. Don’t suppose that when you get to heaven you will have to ask “Where is the man Christ Jesus?” You will see Him straight before you on His throne, a man like yourselves.

*“Bright like a man, the Savior sits;
The God, how bright He shines.”*

But then you will know Christ by His *wounds*. Have you never heard of mothers having recognized their children years after they were lost by the marks and wounds upon their bodies? Ah! beloved, if we ever see our Savior we shall know Him by His wounds. “But,” you say, “They are all gone.” Oh no, for He—

*“Looks like a Lamb that once was slain,
And wears His priesthood still.”*

The hands are still pierced, though the nails are not there. The feet have still the openings through them; and the side is still gaping wide, and we shall know Him by His wounds.

We have heard of some who on the battlefield have been seeking for the dead. They have turned their faces up and looked at them, but knew them not. But the tender wife has come, and there was some deep wound, some saber cut that her husband had received upon his breast, and she said, “It is he. I know him by that wound.” So in heaven we shall in a moment detect our Savior by His wounds, and shall say “It is He, it is He—He who once said, ‘They have pierced my hands and my feet.’”

But then, beloved, Christ and we are not strangers, for we have often seen Him in this glass of the Word. When by the Holy Spirit our poor eyes have been anointed with eye salve, we have sometimes caught a sufficient glimpse of Christ to know Him by it. We have never seen Him except reflectedly. When we have looked in the Bible, He has been above us and looked down upon it, and we have looked there as into a looking glass, and have seen Him “as in a glass darkly.”

But we have seen enough of Him to know Him. And oh, methinks when I see Him, I shall say, “That is the bridegroom I read of in Solomon’s Song. I am sure it is the same Lord that David used to sing of. I know that is Jesus, for He looks even now like that Jesus who said to the poor woman, ‘Neither do I condemn thee—like that blessed Jesus who said, ‘*Talitha Cumi*’—‘Maid, I say unto thee, arise.’” We shall know Him because He will be so much like the Bible Jesus, that we shall recognize Him at once.

Yet more, we have known Him better than by Scripture sometimes—by close and intimate *fellowship* with Him. Why, we meet Jesus in the dark sometimes, but we have sweet conversation with Him, and He puts His lips against our ear, and our lip goes so close to His ear, when we hold converse with Him. Oh! we shall know Him well enough when we see Him.

You may trust the believer for knowing His Master when he finds Him. We shall not need to have Jesus Christ introduced to us when we go to heaven, for if He were off His throne and sitting down with all the rest of the blessed spirits, we should go up to Him directly and say, “Jesus, I know You.” The devil knew Him, for he said, “Jesus I know,” and I am sure God’s people ought to know Him.

“Jesus, I know You,” we shall say at once, as we go up to Him. “How do you know Me?” says Jesus. “Why sweet Jesus, we are no strangers. You have manifested Yourself to me as You do not unto the world. You have given me sometimes such tokens of Your gracious affection, do you think I have forgotten You? Why, I have seen Your hands and Your feet sometimes by faith, and I have put my hand into Your side, like Thomas of old, and think You that I am a stranger to You? No, blessed Jesus, if You were to put Your hand before Your eyes, and hide Your countenance I should know You then. Were You blindfolded once more, my eyes would tell you, for I have known You too long to doubt Your personality.”

Believer, take this thought with you, “We shall see *him*,” despite all the changes in His position. It will be the same person. We shall see the same hands that were pierced, the same feet that were weary, the same lips that preached, the same eyes that wept, the same heart that heaved with agony—positively the same, except as to His condition. “We shall see *him*.” Write the word HIM as large as you like. “We shall see *him* as he is.”

III. This brings us to the third point—THE POSITIVE NATURE OF THE VISION.

“We *shall see* him as he is.” This is not the land of sight, it is too dark a country to see *Him*, and our eyes are not good enough. We walk here by faith and not by sight. It is pleasant to believe His grace, but we had rather see it. Well, “We *shall see* him.”

But perhaps you think, when it says, “We shall see him,” that it means, we shall know more about Him, we shall think more of Him, we shall get better views of Him by faith. Oh, no, it does not at all. It means what it says—positive sight. Just as plainly as I can see my brother there, just as plainly as I can see any of you, shall I see Christ—with these very eyes too. With these very eyes that look on you shall I look on the Savior.

It is not a fancy that we shall see Him. Do not begin cutting these words to pieces. Do you see that gas lamp? You will see the Savior in the same fashion—naturally, positively really, actually. You will not see Him dreamily, you will not see Him in the poetical sense of the word—see, you will not see Him in the metaphorical meaning of the word. But positively, you shall “see him as he is.” “See him,” mark that. Not think about Him, and dream about Him, but we shall positively “see him as he is.”

How different that sight of Him will be from that which we have here. For here we see Him *by reflection*. Now, I have told you before, we see Christ “through a glass darkly,” then we shall see Him face to face.

Good Doctor John Owen, in one of his books, explains this passage, “Here we see through a glass darkly,” and he says that means, “Here we look through a telescope, and we see Christ only darkly through it.” But the good man had forgotten that telescopes were not invented till hundreds of years after Paul wrote, so that Paul could not have intended telescopes.

Others have tried to give other meanings to the word. The fact is, glass was never used to see through at that time. They used glass to see *by*, but not to see *through*. The only glass they had for seeing was a glass mirror. They had some glass which was no brighter than our black common bottle glass. “Here we see through a glass darkly.” That means, by means of a mirror.

As I have told you, Jesus is represented in the Bible. There is His portrait. We look on the Bible and we see it. We see Him “through a glass darkly.” Just as sometimes when you are looking in your looking glass, you see somebody going along in the street. You do not see the person, you only see him reflected. Now, we see Christ reflected, but then we shall not see Him in the looking glass, we shall positively see His person. Not the reflected Christ, not Christ in the sanctuary, not the mere Christ shining out of the Bible, not Christ reflected from the sacred pulpit, but “we shall see him as he is.”

Again, *how partially we see Christ here*. The best believer only gets half a glimpse of Christ. While here one Christian sees Christ’s glorious head, and he delights much in the hope of His coming. Another beholds His wounds and he always preaches the atonement. Another looks into His heart, and he glories most in immutability and the doctrine of election.

Another only looks at Christ’s manhood, and he speaks much concerning the sympathy of Christ with believers. Another thinks more of His Godhead and you will always hear him asserting the divinity of Christ. I do not think there is a believer who has seen the whole of Christ. No. We preach as much as we can do of the Master, but we cannot paint Him wholly.

Some of the best paintings, you know, only just give the head and shoulders, they do not give the full-length portrait. There is no believer, there is no choice divine, that could paint a full-length portrait of Christ. There are some of you who could not paint much more than His little finger. And mark, if we can paint the little finger of Jesus well, it will be worth a lifetime to be able to do that. Those who paint best cannot paint even His face fully. Ah! He is so glorious and wondrous that we cannot fully portray Him. We have not seen Him more than partially.

Come, beloved, how much do you know of Christ? You will say, “Ah! I know some little of Him. I could join with the spouse, when she declares that He is altogether lovely, but I have not surveyed Him from head to foot, and on His wondrous glories I cannot fully dwell.” Here we see Christ partially—there we shall see Christ entirely, when “we shall see him as he is.”

Here, too, *how dimly we see Christ!* It is through many shadows that we now behold our Master. Dim enough is the vision here, but there “We shall see him as he is.” Have you never stood upon the hilltops, when the mist has played on the valley? You have looked down to see the city and the streamlet below, you could just ken yonder steeple, and mark that pinnacle. You could see that dome in the

distance, but they were all so swathed in the mist that you could scarcely discern them. Suddenly the wind has blown away the mist from under you, and you have seen the fair, fair valley.

Ah! it is so when the believer enters heaven. Here he stands and looks upon Christ veiled in a mist—upon a Jesus who is shrouded. But when he gets up there, on Pisgah's brow, higher still, with his Jesus, then he shall not see Him dimly, but he shall see Him brightly. We shall see Jesus, then “without a veil between”—not dimly, but face to face.

Here, too, *how distantly we see Christ!* Almost as far off as the farthest star! We see Him, but not nigh. We behold Him, but not near to us. We catch some glimpse of Him, but oh! what lengths and distances lie between! What hills of guilt—a heavy load! But then we shall see Him closely. We shall see Him face to face, as a man talks with his friend, even so shall we then talk with Jesus. Now we are distant from Him, then we shall be near to Him. Away in the highlands, where Jesus dwells, there shall our hearts be too, when heart and body shall be “present with the Lord.”

And oh! *how transitory is our view of Jesus!* It is only a little while we get a glimpse of Christ and then He seems to depart from us. Our chariots have sometimes been like Amminadib's, but in a little while the wheels are all gone and we have lost the blessed Lord. Have you not some hours in your life felt so to be in the presence of Christ that you scarcely knew where you were? Talk of Elijah's chariots and horses of fire, you were on fire yourself. You could have made yourself into a horse and chariot of fire, and gone to heaven easily enough.

But then, all of a sudden, did you never feel as if a lump of ice had fallen on your heart, and put the fire out and you have cried, “Where has my beloved gone? Why has He hidden His face? Oh! how dark! how dim!” But, Christians, there will be no hidings of faces in heaven! Blessed Lord Jesus! there will be no coverings of Your eyes in glory. Is not Your heart a sea of love, where all passions roll?

And there is no ebb-tide of Your sea, sweet Jesus, there. Are You not everything? There will be no losing You there—no putting Your hand before Your eyes up there, but without a single alteration, without change or diminution, our unwearied, unclouded eyes, shall throughout eternity perpetually behold You. “We shall see him as he is!” Blessed sight! Oh! that it were come!

Then do you know, there will be another difference. When “we shall see him as he is,” how much better that sight will be than what we have here! When we see Christ here, we see Him to our profit. When we see Him there, we shall see Him to *our perfection*. I bear my Master witness, I never saw Him yet, without being profited by Him.

There are many men in this world whom we see very often, and get very little good by, and the less we see of them the better. But of our Jesus we can say, we never come near Him without receiving good by Him. I never touched His garments yet, without feeling that my fingers did smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia out of the ivory palaces.

I never did come near His lips, but what His very breath shed perfume on me. I was never near my Master yet, but what He slew some sin for me. I never have approached Him, but His blessed eyes burned a lust out of my heart for me. I have never come near to hear Him speak, but I felt I was melting when the Beloved spoke, being conformed into His image. But then beloved, it will not be to improve us, it will be to perfect us, when we see Him up there. “We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

Oh! that first sweet look on Christ, when we shall have left the body! I am clothed in rags—He looks upon me, and I am clothed in robes of light. I am black—He looks upon me, and I forget the tents of Kedar, and become white as the curtains of Solomon. I am defiled, sin has looked upon me, and there is filth upon my garments—lo, I am whiter than the driven snow, for He has looked upon me. I have evil wishes and evil thoughts, but they have fled like the demon before His face, when He said, “Get thee hence, Satan; I command thee to come out of the man.” “We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

I know, beloved, the Savior seems to you like a great ship, and I like some small boat, trying to pull the ship out of the harbor. It is how I feel myself. I have the oars, I am trying to pull, but it is such a

glorious big ship, that I cannot pull it out. There are some subjects the rudder of which I can take hold of and guide anywhere—they will come out of any harbor, let the passage be ever so narrow. But this is a noble ship—so big that we can hardly get it out to sea.

It needs the Holy Ghost to blow the sails for you, and your whole souls to dwell upon it, and desire to think of this wondrous sight, and then I hope you will go away dissatisfied with the preacher, because you will feel that the subject had altogether mastered him and you also.

IV. Lastly, here are THE ACTUAL PERSONS.

“We shall see him as he is.” Come, now, beloved! I do not like dividing you. It seems hard work that you and I should be split asunder, when I am sure we love each other with all our hearts. Ten thousand deeds of kindness received from you, ten thousand acts of heart-felt love and sympathy, knit my heart to my people. But oh! beloved, is it not obvious that when we say, “We shall see him,” that word “we” does not signify all of us—does not include everybody here! “We shall see him as he is!” Come, let us divide that “we” into “I’s.” How many “I’s” are there here that will “see him as he is”?

Brother, with snow upon your head, will you “see him as he is”? You have had many years of fighting, and trying, and trouble—if you ever do “see him as he is,” that will pay for all. “Yes,” say you, “I know in whom I have believed.” Well, brother, your old dim eyes will soon need no spectacles soon. To “see him as he is,” will give you back your youth’s bright beaming eye, with all its lustre and its fire.

But are your grey hairs full of sin? and does lust tarry in your old cold blood? Ah! you shall see him, but not nigh, you shall be driven from His presence. Would God this arm were strong enough to drag you to the Savior, but it is not. I leave you in His hands. God save you!

And you, dear brother, and you, dear sister, who have come to middle age, struggling with the toils of life, mixed up with all its battles, enduring its ills, you are asking, it may be, shall you see Him! The text says, “We shall,” and can you and I put our hands on our hearts and know our union with Jesus? If so, “We shall see him as he is.”

Brother! Fight on! Up at the devil! Strike hard at him! Fear not! that sight of Christ will pay you. Soldier of the cross, whet your sword again, and let it cut deep. Laborer! toil again, delve deeper, lift the axe higher with a brawnier and stouter arm, for the sight of your Master at last will please you well. Up, warrior! Up the rampart, for victory sits smiling on the top, and you shall meet your Captain there! When your sword is reeking with the blood of your sins, it will be a glory indeed to meet your Master, when you are clothed with triumph, and then to “see him as he is.”

Young man, my brother in age, the text says, “We shall see him as he is.” Does “we” mean that young man there in the aisle? Does it mean you, my brother, up there? Shall *we* “see him as he is”? We are not ashamed to call each other brethren in this house of prayer. Young man, you have got a mother and her soul dotes upon you. Could your mother come to you this morning, she might take hold of your arm and say to you, “John, we shall ‘see him as he is,’—it is not I, John, that shall see Him for myself alone, but you and I shall see Him together, ‘We shall see him as he is.’”

Oh! bitter, bitter thought that just now crossed my soul! O heavens! if we ever should be sundered from those we love so dearly when the last day of account shall come! Oh! if we should not see Him as He is! Methinks to a son’s soul there can be nought more harrowing than the thought that it possibly may happen that some of his mother’s children shall see God and he shall not!

I had a letter just now from a person who thanks God that he read the Sermon, “Many Shall Come from the East and from the West,” and he hopes it has brought him to God. He says, “I am one out of a large family, and all of them love God except myself. I don’t know that I should have thought of it, but I took up this sermon of yours and it has brought me to the Savior.”

Oh! beloved, think of bringing the last out of nine children to the Savior! Have not I made a mother’s heart leap for joy? But oh! if that young man had been lost out of the nine, and had seen his eight brothers and sisters in heaven, while he himself was cast out, I think he would have had nine hells—he would be nine times more miserable in hell, as he saw each of them and his mother and his father too, accepted, and himself cast out. It would not have been “we” there with the whole family.

What a pleasant thought it is, that we can assemble today, some of us, and can put our hands round those we love and stand an unbroken family—father, mother, sister, brother, and all else who are dear, and can say by humble faith, “We shall see him as he is”—all of us, not one left out!

Oh! my friends, we feel like a family at Park Street. I do feel myself, when I am away from you, that there is nothing like this place, that there is nothing on earth which can recompense the pain of absence from this hallowed spot. Somehow or other, we feel knit together by such ties of love!

Last Sabbath I went into a place where the minister gave us the vilest stuff that ever was brewed. I am sure I wished I was back here, that I might preach a little godliness, or else hear it. Poor Wesleyan thing! He preached works from beginning to end, from that very beautiful text, “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy!” telling us that whatever we sowed, that we should reap, without ever mentioning salvation for sinners, and pardon required even by saints.

It was something like this, “Be good men and women, and you shall have heaven for it. Whatsoever you sow you are sure to reap, and if you are very good people, and do the best you can, you will all go to heaven, but if you are very bad and wicked, then you will have to go to hell. I am sorry to tell you so, but whatever you sow that shall you reap.” Not a morsel about Jesus Christ, from beginning to end, not a scrap.

“Well,” I thought, “they say I’m rather hard upon these Arminian fellows, but if I do not drive my old sword into them worse than ever, now I have heard them myself again, then I am not a living man!” I thought they might have altered a little and not preach works so much, but I am sure there never was a sermon more full of salvation by works preached by the Pope himself, than that was.

They do believe in salvation by works, whatever they may say, and however they may deny it when you come to close quarters with them. For they are so everlastingly telling you to be good, and upright, and godly, and never directing you first to look to the bleeding wounds of a dying Savior, never telling you about God’s free grace, which has brought you out of enormous sins, but always talking about that goodness, goodness, goodness, which will never be found in the creature.

Well, beloved, somehow or other, wherever we go, we seem that we must come back here.

*“Here our best friends, our kindred dwell;
Here God our Saviour reigns.”*

And the thought of losing one of you grieves me almost as much as the thought of losing any of my relatives. How often have we looked at one another with pleasure! How often have we met together, to sing the same old songs to the same old tunes! How often have we prayed together! And how dearly we all of us love the sound of the word, “Grace, grace, grace!”

And yet there are some of you that I know in my heart, and you know yourselves, will not see Him, unless you have a change—unless you have a new heart and a right spirit. Well, would you like to meet your pastor at the day of judgment, and feel that you must be parted from him because his warnings were unheeded and his invitations cast to the wind.

Think you, young man, that you would like to meet me at the day of judgment, there to remember what you have heard, and what you have disregarded? And think you that you would like to stand before your God, and remember how the way of salvation was preached to you, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized, and thou shalt be saved”—and that you did disregarded the message? That were sad indeed.

But we leave the thought with you, and lest you should think that if you are not worthy, you will not see Him—if you are not good you will not see Him—if you do not do such and such good things you will not see Him—let me just tell you, whosoever, though he be the greatest sinner under heaven—whosoever, though his life is the most filthy and the most corrupt—whosoever he is, though he has up till now been the most abandoned and profligate—whosoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall have everlasting life. For God will blot out his sins, will give him righteousness through Jesus, accept

him in the Beloved, save him by His mercy, keep him by His grace, and at last present him spotless and faultless before His presence with exceedingly great joy.

My dear friends, it is a sweet thought to close with now, that with a very large part of you I can say, “We shall see him as he is.” For you know when we sit down at the Lord’s table, we occupy the whole ground floor of this chapel, and I believe that half of us are people of God here, for I know that many members cannot get to the Lord’s table in the evening.

Brethren, we have one heart, one soul, “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” We may be sundered here below a little while, some may die before us, as our dear brother Mitchell has died. Some may cross the stream before the time comes for us, but we shall meet again on the other side of the river. “We shall see him as he is.”

EXPOSITION

I JOHN 3:1-10

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.”

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

As dear Dr. Hawker said concerning this, here is a chapter in every word and a sermon in every letter. How it opens with a “Behold!” because it is such a striking portion of sacred Scripture, that the Holy Ghost would have us pay particular attention to it.

“Behold!” says he, “read other Scriptures if you like, with a glance, but stop here. I have put up a way-mark to tell you there is something eminently worthy of attention buried beneath these words.” “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us.” Consider who we were and who we are now. Ay, and what we feel ourselves to be even when divine grace is powerful in us.

And yet, beloved, we are called “*the sons of God.*” It is said that when one of the learned heathens was translating this, he stopped and said, “No, it cannot be. Let it be written, ‘Subjects,’ not ‘Sons,’ for it is impossible we should be called ‘the sons of God.’”

What a high relationship is that of a son to his father! What privileges a son has from his father! What liberties a son may take with his father! and oh! what obedience the son owes to his father, and what love the father feels towards the son! But all *that*, and more than *that*, we now have through Christ.

“Behold!” you angels! stop, you seraphs! here is a thing more wonderful than heaven with its walls of jasper. Behold, universe! open your eyes, O world. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.” Well, we are content to go with Him in His humiliation, for we are to be exalted with Him.

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God.”

That is easy to read, but it is not so easy to feel. “*Now* are we the sons of God.” How is it with your heart this morning? Are you in the lowest depths of sorrow and suffering? “*Now* are you a son of God.” Does corruption rise within your spirit and grace seem like a poor spark trampled under foot? “Beloved, *now* are you a son of God.” Does your faith almost fail you? and are your graces like a candle well-nigh blown out by the wind? Fear not, beloved, it is not your graces, it is not your frames, it is not your feelings, on which you are to live—you must live simply by naked faith on Christ. “Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God.”

With all these things against us, with the foot of the devil on our neck, and the sword in his hand ready to slay us—beloved *now* in the very depths of our sorrow, wherever we may be—*now*, as much in the valley as on the mountain, as much in the dungeon as in the palace, as much when broken on the wheel of suffering as when exalted on the wings of triumph, “beloved, *now* are we the sons of God.”

“Ah!” but you say, “see how I am arrayed! my graces are not bright, my righteousness does not shine with apparent glory.” But read the next, “*It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.*” We are not so much like Him now, but we have some more refining process to undergo, and death itself, that best of all friends, is yet to wash us clean. “We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

“And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”

“And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.”

Believer, read these words in two senses. He was manifested to take away your sins that you have committed. And that He accomplished, when “the just for the unjust,” He sustained the penalties of them. And He was manifested to take away the power of your sins—that is to say, to conquer your reigning lusts, to take away your evil imaginations, to purify you, and make you like Himself.

Well, beloved, what a mercy it is that someone was manifested to take away our sins from us! for some of us have been striving a long, long while to conquer our sins and we cannot do it. We thought we had driven them out, but they had “chariots of iron,” and we could not overcome them. They lived “in the hill country,” and we could not get near them. As often as we worsted them in one battle, they came upon us thick and strong, like an army of locusts—when heaps and heaps had been destroyed they seemed as thick as ever.

Ah! but here is a thought—they shall all be taken away. “Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins,” and so He will. The time will come when you and I shall stand without spot or blemish before the throne of God, for they are “without fault before the throne of God” at this moment, and so shall we be ere long.

“Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.”

This plain, simple verse, has been twisted by some who believe in the doctrine of perfection, and they have made it declare that it is possible for some to abide in Christ, and therefore not to sin. But you will remark that it does not say, that *some* that abide in Christ do not sin, but it says that *none* who abide in Christ sin. “Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not.”

Therefore this passage is not to be applied to a few who attain to what is called by our Arminian friends the fourth degree—perfection. But it appertains to all believers, and of every soul in Christ it may be said, that he sins not.

In reading the Bible, we read it simply as we would read another book. We ought not to read it as a preacher his text, with the intention of making something out of every word. But we should read it as we find it written, “Whosoever abideth in Christ sinneth not.” Now we are sure that cannot mean that he does not sin at all, but it means that he sins not habitually, he sins not designedly, he sins not finally, so as to perish.

The Bible often calls a man righteous, but that does not mean that he is perfectly righteous. It calls a man a sinner, but it does not imply that he may not have done some good deeds in his life—it means that that is the man’s general character. So with the man who abides in Christ, his general character is not that he is a sinner, but that he is a saint—he sins not openly willfully, before men.

In his own heart, he has much to confess, but his life before his fellow creatures is such a one that it can be said of him, “Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: but whosoever sinneth [the sins of this world in which the multitude indulge] hath not seen him, neither known him.”

“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous; even as he is righteous.”

That is the sign of it. Works are the fruits of grace. “He is righteous”—not in himself, for mark how graces come in here, “He is righteous, even as HE is righteous.” It will not allow our righteousness to be our own, but it brings us to Christ again. “He that doeth righteousness is righteous,” not according to his own works, but “even as HE is righteous.”

Good works prove that I have perfect righteousness in Christ. They do not help the righteousness of Christ, nor yet in any way make me righteous. Good works are of no use whatever in the matter of justification—the only use they are, is, that they are for our comfort, for the benefit of others, and for the glory of God. “He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil.”

“He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”

“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.”

It were well if we always remembered that practical godliness is the sort of godliness—that it is not talking religion, but walking religion which proves a man to be sincere. It is not having a religious tongue, but a religious heart. It is not a religious mouth, but a religious foot. The best evidence is the salvation of the soul.

Avaunt! talkative, go your way, you mere professing formalist! Your ways lead down to hell and your end shall be destruction, for “He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.